

VZCZCXRO7035

OO RUEHBC RUEHKUK RUEHROV RUEHTRO
DE RUEHKH #1775/01 3480906
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 130906Z DEC 08 ZDK CTG NUMEROUS REQUESTS
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2520
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001775

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AF/SPG,
EUR/NB, NEA/ARP
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/17/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL PINR ECON ASEC KPKO UN AU SU

SUBJECT: SLM/MM REQUESTS VISIT TO U.S., MEDICAL TREATMENT
FOR THEIR LEADER, AND FUNDING FOR CONFERENCE

REF: KHARTOUM 1764

KHARTOUM 00001775 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (U) This is an action request. See paragraph 7.

¶12. (C) SUMMARY: On December 11, SLM/Minnawi (SLM/MM) leaders in Khartoum visited CDA Fernandez requesting U.S. support for a visit to Washington, medical treatment for Minni Minnawi, and discrete funding for a leadership or party conference. SLM/MM leaders also attentively listened to CDA's analysis of Sudanese politics and asserted that the Government of Sudan is not addressing the volatile situation it has created. They warned that the regime may not be able to respond because of financial problems. In a separate conversation on December 12, Minnawi asked for US intervention with the Qataris to ensure SLM/MM participation in any preparatory meetings for a possible Doha conference.
END SUMMARY.

SLM/MM VERY INQUISITIVE ABOUT U.S. POLICY DURING THE
TRANSITION

¶13. (C) On December 11, SLM/MM Member of Parliament Ali Traio and Chief of Staff Muhammad Bashir visited CDA Fernandez at the U.S. Embassy. Traio and Bashir opened with a series of questions ranging from the timing of an expected ICC indictment against President Omar al-Bashir to the possibility of President-elect Obama establishing a no-fly zone over Darfur. Muhammad Bashir and Traio agreed with the CDA that the GoS is currently in a waiting mode, and that it has failed to address the fundamental problems of Darfur. "The Government is not addressing the very volatile situation that it has created and makes threats that an ICC indictment will bring chaos to the country," said Traio.

¶14. (C) Traio also suggested that there are internal divisions within the NCP's ranks. Traio added that it will be very difficult for someone within the NCP to replace Bashir as "any change will have to happen very quickly, as each group in the party has their own militias and territories, and Bashir's removal would affect all of this - anything could happen." Muhammed Bashir reported that SLM/MM contact with NCP officials such as former South Darfur Governor Atta Al-Mannan indicates that the GoS is very concerned about its financial security. If the price of oil remains low, continued Bashir, the GoS may be unable to pay all of its employees in 2009, "and this could lead to a

popular revolution." Traio continued with questions regarding the U.S. position on an Article 16 postponement of an indictment against President Bashir (to which CDA repeated U.S. policy) and the possibility of no-fly zones and the deployment of NATO troops to Darfur. CDA noted that future US policy on Sudan is not set and will await decisions by the incoming administration but that the USG will continue to care deeply about the situation in Sudan, especially in Darfur.

MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR MINNAWI

- - - - -

¶5. (C) Traio reported that SLM/MM met with the Norwegian Ambassador in Khartoum before the Eid Holiday (presumably on or shortly before December 7) to discuss the possibility of Minnawi receiving medical treatment in Oslo. Traio reported that he and other SLM/MM representatives were disappointed by the Ambassador's failure to give a clear response. CDA Fernandez explained that A/S Frazer pressed the Norwegians on this issue, and that he personally had raised it with the Norwegian Ambassador late last week. The CDA said that the Norwegian Ambassador had initially given an outright "no" to the proposal, and that the CDA attempted to persuade him otherwise. The CDA noted that the indecision the Norwegian voiced to SLM/MM representatives was likely a result of this U.S. intervention, and that it may be necessary to look at other options, given the Norwegian Ambassador's ambivalent response to this proposal. Traio agreed and said that SLM/MM may be able to pay for medical treatment for Minnawi in the U.S., if he is given a visa and appropriate assistance. The CDA said that he would explore whether this might be an option, but attempted to lower SLM/MM expectations, given the high cost of medical care in the U.S. and the lengthy bureaucracy and complexity of such an endeavor.

KHARTOUM 00001775 002 OF 002

REQUEST FOR SUPPORT FOR VISIT AND PARTY CONFERENCE

- - - - -

¶6. (C) Traio stated that Minnawi is eager to visit the U.S. sometime in January and would like to know whether this is a possibility. CDA Fernandez said that Minnawi raised the topic with him in a recent phone call, when Minnawi indicated that he is aware of a possible Salva Kiir visit to the U.S. in early January. The CDA noted that given the sensitive nature of an SPLM or SLM/MM visit to the U.S., it is best to discuss these issues in person and not over the phone. Traio stated that a conversation with a visiting Sudan Programs Group officer (reftel) had led him to believe that a visit for Minnawi is possible. The CDA said that he would discuss this with Washington (as he was previously unaware of any plans.) Traio also said that SLM/MM continues to discuss the possibility of a SLM/MM leadership or party conference in January, and that it would like to know the level of U.S. support for such a conference.

¶7. (C) Minnawi himself called CDA from Tripoli, Libya where he has been fruitlessly waiting to see Qaddafi for several days. Minnawi said that the Qataris were not engaging with his movement, as they focused on Khalil Ibrahim and Abdul Wahid Nur, and asked for US pressure on the Qataris to make sure that SLM/MM is part of any preparatory process. Minnawi said that the Libyans were trying to encourage a common front by non-signatory Darfuri movements, perhaps to confound Qatari peace-making efforts.

ACTION REQUEST

- - - - -

¶8. (C) Post seeks the following actions and guidance from Washington:

- Medical Treatment for Minnawi: 1) Re-engagement with the Norwegians at the senior level regarding the possibility of medical treatment in Oslo. 2) Alternative planning for Minnawi's medical treatment should the Norwegians deny SLM/MM's request, with scenarios in and outside of the U.S.

- Potential SLM/MM Travel to the U.S.: Guidance regarding the possibility of travel for Minnawi and his close associates to Washington during January or later.

- Support for SLM/MM Conference: Guidance regarding the level of U.S. support for a potential SLM/MM conference to be held in 2009.

- Continued USG intervention with the Qataris to promote SLM/MM as one of the key groups to be consulted in the Doha process and in any preparatory meetings.

COMMENT

¶9. (C) Overall, Minnawi's Khartoum-based leadership appeared confused during this interim period in Sudanese politics and incredibly receptive to the CDA's analysis. Even though they had recently spoken to their leader while he waits in Libya, they seemed to be less informed than usual. Their persistence regarding medical treatment for Minnawi indicates that Minnawi and his associates are very concerned about his health. Although SLM/MM needs to prepare itself for the next stage, it struggles with passing on messages down the ranks. A leadership or party conference could be beneficial in this respect, and we will continue to encourage SLM/MM to refocus its efforts on its internal political and military strength. More important is SLM/MM's engagement with Qatar and with UN/AU Mediator Bassole, and with non-signatory movements, about next steps in the political process.

FERNANDEZ